

DCS Celebrates Foster Care Month

Nashville, Tenn. - May 1st kicks off National Foster Care Month in Tennessee with a focus on honoring existing foster families and recruiting new families to care for children in DCS custody.

During the month of May, DCS will take the opportunity to educate the community about the foster care program and the critical need for additional foster families.

"When a child is removed from their biological family, they need to have a sense of belonging. A foster family can provide that security and have a major impact on the life of a child by creating a meaningful relationship that will last for years," said DCS Commissioner Viola P. Miller. "Being a foster parent is a rewarding experience for the parents and for the siblings who gain a foster brother or sister."

DCS case managers strive to place children in a family type environment within their own community whenever possible. There are approximately 3500 DCS foster parents statewide that care for children in the custody of the state.

Foster parents play an extremely important role in a foster child's life by providing them with a safe and stable environment. When a child is removed from their biological family, a foster family can ensure a child's emotional, physical, and social needs are met.

Families are needed for children of all ages and ethnicities. However, there is a particular need for families who will open their hearts and homes to sibling groups and children with physical and medical needs.

As of March 31, 2004, 10,523 children were in DCS custody. Of these children, 822 were under 2 years of age, 1247 range in age from 2-4 years, 2849 range in age from 5-12 years, and 5604 were ages 13-18.

The following is a regional composite of DCS children and youth:

Region	Children in Custody
Davidson	1088
East	1320
Hamilton	565
Knox	613
Mid-Cumberland	1320
Northeast	1017
Northwest	379
Shelby	1404
South Central	719
Southeast	595
Southwest	656
Upper Cumberland	847
Total	10,523

For information on becoming a foster parent, please contact 1-877-DCS KIDS (327-5437) or visit our website at www.tennessee.gov/youth.